

Jim Moran's JM Family Enterprises corrupt history and ties to Koch/ALEC

Florida State University's much lauded \$100 million initiative to expand the Jim Moran Center for Global Entrepreneurship into a standalone school seems to be based in an acknowledgement of Jim Moran's business "legacy." There are several reasons for pause before erecting further tribute to Moran, including (predictable) ties between the Jim Moran Foundation and the mechanisms of Charles Koch's political empire. Other concerns stem from FSU purporting to educate about entrepreneurship while whitewashing the history of how Moran made his billions; a multi-state system of corruption, racketeering, and racial discrimination.

For decades, Moran's Southeast Toyota has had exclusive rights to sell Toyotas in Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and the Carolinas. As such, it systematically coerced dealers into using Moran's other automotive businesses, all parts of JM Family Enterprises (JMFE). The [dozens of lawsuits](#) (in all 5 states) corroborate these claims, and further, that Moran forced dealers to make specific [political contributions](#). After a being convicted on [seven counts](#) of tax evasion in 1984, and nearly losing his business license in two states for obstruction of justice, Moran's political spending and lobbying in Florida helped create [tax-loopholes](#) that left JMFE with a negative tax rate by the late nineties.

A 1992 [congressional investigation](#) contained sworn deposition from several Southeast Toyota officials confirming an explicit and systematic rejection of dealership applicants solely on the basis of race (prompting perhaps one of the few recent times that the phrase "F***** N*****" has appeared in congressional testimony). Much of Moran's "philanthropy" followed from lawsuit settlements and, despite continued suits, has largely reshaped his public image. The year before FSU's Moran Institute opened, he may have been better known for the "[Sex for Cars](#)" lawsuits, detailing coerced requirements that prostitutes be on hand when JMFE executives visited dealerships.

When Thrasher [claims](#) "[w]e are ready to build on the legacy of Jim Moran to create a robust entrepreneurial ecosystem," I can not help but imagining Moran's Toyota tendrils like invasive Japanese Kudzu, hideously flourishing throughout the southeast not by virtue, but by leveraging unchecked advantages.

Moran's history aside, the clear and present dangers of FSU's partnership with the Jim Moran Foundation is board member Steve Evans who, alongside JMFE's CEO Colin Brown, help lead [Florida Taxwatch](#), a member of the Koch funded State Policy Network. Additionally, it should (sicken but) not surprise anyone that JMFE has, for decades, supported the Koch-funded corporate bill-mill called the American Legislative Exchange Council, or that JMFE had a former President of Koch International as a [recent](#) VP.

Ignoring entrepreneurship's questionable status as an academic field warranting its own school, this is yet another example of FSU acquiescing to corporate directives in the absence of meaningful faculty review. Worse, in return for a "stand alone" school, this gift counts towards Thrasher's questionable fundraising bonus pay. This appears to allow Thrasher direct compensation in return for allowing political allies (substantial Scott contributors in this case) to rent or buy FSU's legitimacy.

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In recognition of Jim Moran's professional leadership and support of education, Florida State University conferred an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree upon him in 1996. The degree was the 93rd awarded in the University's 146-year history, and the first originating from the College of Business. Jim was congratulated at the ceremony by (from left) President Sandy D'Alemberte, College of Business Dean Melvin Stith and Provost Larry Abele.